

# STATE OF COLORADO

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**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

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**Bill Ritter, Jr.**  
Governor

May 24, 2008

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.  
Through: Regional Administrator  
FEMA Region VIII  
Building 710, POB 25267  
Denver, CO 80225-0267

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5206 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Colorado as a result of a series of severe storms and tornadoes striking several areas in Colorado, in particular areas of Weld and Larimer Counties near the towns of Windsor (which straddles Weld and Larimer Counties), Ft. Collins, Gilcrest, Greeley, Johnstown, Milliken, Platteville, and Wellington. The severe storms spawned multiple tornadoes, the largest of which damaged hundreds of homes and businesses near Windsor, and was extremely unusual for Colorado, in that it had a ground track a mile wide and was in contact with the ground for a track of over 35 miles.

Between noon and 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 22, 2008, a series of severe storms and tornadoes struck the area around central Weld County and eastern Larimer County. The most severe tornado was a mile wide and drove through a 35 mile ground track around Windsor, Colorado. Hundreds of residences, local businesses, including a day care center, and dozens of vehicles were severely damaged. The State Farm Insurance regional office in the area took a direct hit. Livestock across a wide area were killed. Rail cars and semi-tractors were toppled or swept away, and many motor vehicle accidents were directly caused by the storms. Hail three inches in diameter pelted the area, causing extensive damage. A man in a local campground was killed when a tornado struck his truck, and forty or more individuals were treated for other injuries, with six being transported to local hospitals. The storm caused extensive damage to the power system resulting in the loss of power to at least 60,000 area residents. The storm toppled at least 170 power towers, and downed power lines blocked many area roads. Hundreds of area residents were evacuated due to numerous natural gas leaks caused by the

tornadoes. During the Preliminary Damage Assessment, many uninsured and underinsured victims were identified; especially hard hit by this lack or insufficiency of insurance were renters and the elderly. All of this has taken a substantial emotional toll on the residents of these communities, and the Division of Mental Health crisis teams dispatched to the area have been extremely busy.

The preliminary damage assessment indicates that a total of 851 residences have been impacted, with 78 destroyed, 228 taking major damage, 179 taking minor damage, and 366 affected.

In response to the situation, I have taken appropriate action under State law. In accordance with Section 401 of the Stafford Act, on May 22, 2008, I verbally declared a state of disaster emergency in Weld and Larimer Counties and directed the execution and implementation of the State Emergency Plan; on May 23, 2008, I memorialized this declaration in Executive Order number D 011 08.

The State of Colorado has a dynamic, proactive mitigation planning program. The State's Standard Mitigation Plan was approved by FEMA in January of 2008.

On May 22, 2008, I requested a joint Federal, State, and local damage assessment be conducted in the affected areas. Preliminary assessments indicated the most severe impacts were to occupied residences and businesses in the eastern area of Windsor and western area of Greeley. As a consequence of the tornadoes, hundreds of citizens and dozens of businesses are out of their facilities.

I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and the affected local governments and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary. I am specifically requesting the following: Individual Assistance (including the Individuals and Households Program (IHP), Disaster Legal Services, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling); and Small Business Administration disaster loans for Weld and Larimer Counties and Hazard Mitigation assistance statewide. The State reserves the right to request Public Assistance at a later date, as additional information becomes available.

Preliminary estimates of the types and amount of assistance needed under the Stafford Act are tabulated in Enclosures A and B. Estimated requirements for assistance from certain Federal agencies under other statutory authorities are tabulated in Enclosure C. The State reserves the right to provide supplemental and additional information in support of this request as it becomes available.

The following information is furnished on the nature and amount of State and local resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster: The communities of Greeley, Windsor, and Weld County have all declared disaster emergencies and activated their local emergency operations plans and emergency

operations centers. I have ordered the transfer of funds into the State Disaster Emergency Fund. Local governments that have declared disaster emergencies, have authorized access to their Taxpayer's Bill of Rights Disaster Reserves. I have also activated the State Emergency Operations Center/Multi-Agency Coordination Center and dispatched in excess of 100 members of the Colorado Army and Air National Guard and regional Incident Management Teams, as well as Colorado Division of Emergency Management, Division of Local Government, Department of Local Affairs, Governor's Office, Division of Fire Safety, Department of Public Health and Environment, Department of Human Services, Colorado Office of Preparedness and Security, Colorado State Patrol, Department of Agriculture, Department of Transportation, Insurance Commission, and Division of Mental Health assistance teams. From the non-profit and faith-based sector, almost 150 American Red Cross volunteers have been involved so far, and have served over 2,600 meals, delivered over 1,600 snacks. Shelter registrations approached 150 individuals and 600 bulk care packages were distributed. The Southern Baptist Convention, Adventist Disaster Service staff, and many other volunteer organizations have been assisting, and the Salvation Army has two mobile canteens operating in the area distributing meals to the incident command and other responder personnel. Mutual aid agreements have been activated and dozens of nearby fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services, hazardous materials, and public works agencies have responded.

I certify that for this major disaster, the State and local governments will assume all applicable non-Federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act. Total expenditures are expected to exceed \$800,000, as set forth in the table in Enclosure D.

I have designated Hans Kallam, Director of the Colorado Division of Emergency Management, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. He will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency in damage assessments and may provide further information or justification on my behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bill Ritter, Jr." in a cursive style.

Bill Ritter, Jr.  
Governor

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Enclosures

**ENCLOSURE A TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST**

Estimated Requirements for Individual Assistance  
under the Stafford Act

<b>County</b>  (List each requested county)	<b>Assistance to Individuals and Households</b>					<b>Other Programs</b>  (Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Legal Services, and Crisis Counseling)
	Temporary Housing  <i>(Indicate No.)</i>	Repairs	Replacement	Permanent Housing Construction	Other Needs Assistance	
LARIMER	134	91	17	0	71	TBD
WELD	1	0	0	0	0	TBD
TOTALS	135	91	17	0	71	TBD

**ENCLOSURE B TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST**

Estimated Requirements for Public Assistance  
Stafford Act

CATEGORY

County	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total
N/A								
Totals:								

*Note: Estimates are to reflect total eligible costs before any cost sharing.*

**ENCLOSURE C TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST**

Estimated Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs

County	SBA Home Loans	SBA Business Loans	FSA Loans	NRCS	FHWA	USACE	OTHER
LARIMER and WELD	842	77	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Totals	842	77	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

*Note: Provide numbers and amounts, as appropriate.*

**ENCLOSURE D TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST**

Governor's Certification

I certify that for this current disaster, State and local government expenditures and obligations will include the non-Federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act. As stated in my basic letter, and based on information available at this time, tabulation of these estimated expenditures and obligations are as follows:

CATEGORY OF ASSISTANCE	AMOUNT	
Individual Assistance:	STATE	LOCAL
"Other Assistance" under the Individuals and Households Program	30,608	N/A
Other (specify)		
<b>Total:</b>	30,608	N/A
Public Assistance:	N/A	N/A
Category A - Debris Removal		
Category B – Emergency Protective Measures		
Category C – Roads and Bridges		
Category D – Water Control Facilities		
Category E – Buildings and Equipment		
Category F – Utilities		
Category G – Other (Parks, Recreational Facilities, etc.)		
<b>Total:</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Grand Total:</b>	30,608	N/A